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Read 7370 Linguistics: Theory & Application for Educators

Language Portfolio

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Overview:

I found all of the activities fun and exciting. They all allowed me to explore language in different ways. The activity I liked the most was the ‘forms of words matter’ activity. It was fun to think of an item and write a silly poem explaining the item. I also enjoyed the ‘language awareness’ activity. I had never thought of language as a web and certainly never pictured myself as a spider or fly in the world of language. It was pretty easy to identify with the fly because of my struggles in school growing up.

One activity that was particularly challenging for me was ‘ruining a poem.’ This was hard for me because I had to learn some Appalachian dialect and make sure I stayed true to the language. Once I wrapped my head around the idea of writing the first poem, it was even harder to translate it to Standard English. I guess it is hard for me to write/create poems that do not have a rhyming pattern (even though I know poems do not have to rhyme).

I think all of the activities required me to think about literacy in general. When I had to write poems or phrases I had to think about the structure of the language as well as the semantics. Language (written and spoken) plays a vital role in society and can be interpreted so differently by so many different people. I really enjoyed all of the activities.

Because the Form of Words Matter:

Grocery Store Checkout Item: Sham Wow

1. The Sham-Wow is an orange rag that is shaped like a rectangle and is very soft. It cleans up spills really fast. You can wash the Sham Wow and use it again and again!
2. O Sham Wow, thou art wonderful

What orange beauty

That cleans by day

And rinses at night

In the mess of life

Thou has been a saver

Oh orange cloth

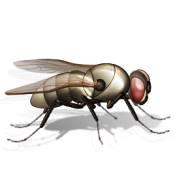
Your beauty shines

While you wipe up the messiness of life

1. Describing the Sham Wow was an interesting, yet thought-provoking task. Trying to break it down in words a child could understand was tricky. The prose version and the poetry version differ quite a bit. The prose version does not see quite as descriptive as the poem. I felt a little bound to the three sentence limit in the prose version and felt freer to express my thoughts in the poem. The sounds of words in the poem seem to help describe the Sham Wow in better detail and tell exactly what it is used for. The lines “cleans by day and washes by night” tell in a looser term what the cloth is used for and that it is reusable. When examining the two pieces, the more effective piece seems to be the prose. It is concise, and gets straight to the details while not making the reader interpret meaning from the poem. Even though the prose is more effective, the more interesting and entertaining piece is the poem. The poem is fun to read and makes a silly item sound so serious.

Language Awareness:

If language is a web, are you a spider or a fly.



I really examined and put a lot of thought into the statement above. I pictured myself as both a spider and a fly, and then quickly realized I was a fly. I have struggled with the elements of language all of my life. As a child I can remember being so confused by the rules of language. It was so hard for me to wrap my brain around dissecting a sentence. I also remember being so confused because I would feel like I finally got a concept, but then the teacher would talk about the exceptions to the rules! Because of these reasons, I quickly realized I was a fly. I am caught up in the web of language and cannot get free. Just as a fly, I struggle to understand parts of the ‘web’ and the more I struggle the more wrapped up in the ‘web’ of language I become. As I have gotten older and studied language further I become less and less stuck in the web. I am still not an expert and doubt I will ever feel confident enough to ‘spin’ the web of language like the spider.

Ruining a Poem:

Drink of Choice: Water

1. Water is cler

Water is ner

I’ve even seen it from da pier

Ridin my boat

It helps me float

And keeps me livin in heat

Water, water can’t be beat

Ain’t no need to get a poke

Just go yonder to the creak to get you a sip

It ain’t no dope, but it will wet your whistle

1. Water is clear

Water is near

I even saw it from a pier

Riding in my boat

It helps keep me a float

And keeps me living in the heat

Water, water is the best

There is no need to get a bag of bottled water from the store

Just go to a stream and take a drink

It is not soda, but will quench your thirst

1. The poems start out very similar, but the endings are very different. The Appalachian poem seems to be the more entertaining and interesting poem. It follows a rhyme theme and uses interesting language. Both poems describe water pretty clearly. It was hard to turn the Appalachian poem into Standard English because I felt like it took away from the poetic beauty. The effectiveness of the poems really depends on the audience. I think for a more general audience the poem written in more Standard English would probably be more effective because of the vocabulary. Some people may not understand the vocabulary in the Appalachian poem and therefore it would not be very effective.

Varieties of English:

1. “Thou shalt not commit adultery”
2. Two varieties of modern English
   1. Don’t hit it, quit it! (slang)
   2. If you c a ring on the finger, don’t b a swinger. (text message lingo)
3. The biblical translation of this commandment simply means do not go outside of your marriage and sleep with another individual. Once it is translated into slang lingo its meaning is changed. The main part of the meaning it loses it the marriage portion. Don’t hit it quit it means just not to have sexual relations with another individual. The term “hit” is a slang that is used in movies and songs recently. The text message lingo holds onto more of the biblical meaning because it talks about having a ring on the finger, which signifies marriage. The word swinger has a denotation in sexual nature. All three of the translations are similar in that they speak of not having sexual relations with different people.

The meaning of each translation would change for different audiences. For example, the slang term may not mean anything to some people because the slang is generational. The biblical version may be hard for some people to understand. The meaning may be especially hard for those who were not exposed to that type of language.

Each translation would have a different sociolinguistic context. You would definitely use the different translations depending on your location and audience. The slang or text translation would not be used in a church, while the biblical translation may not be used by a younger generation.